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INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 7909
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 2363
RUEHDA/AMCONSUL ADANA 1766
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RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 5565
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2184
RUEUITH/DET 1 39LG ANKARA TU
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RHMFIUU/AFOSI DET 523 IZMIR TU
RHMFIUU/39ABG INCIRLIK AB TU
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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
TUESDAY, MARCH 20, 2007

In Today's Papers

Calls for 'Common Sense' on Eve of Nevruz

All papers report Justice Minister Cemil Cicek as saying security measures in 46 provinces around Turkey have been enhanced on the eve of Nevruz celebrations. The leader of DTP, Turkey's main Kurdish party, Ahmet Turk, claimed some groups would attempt provocations during Nevruz, stressing they will not allow tensions during the celebrations. Hundreds of Turkish NGOs and prominent intellectuals, including Professor Baskin Oran and Diyarbakir Bar Association chairman Sezgin Tanrikulu, issued a statement pointing to the rising tensions before Nevruz, and calling for "common sense" from the nation and security forces. Businessmen from southeast Turkey also issued a call for "peaceful celebrations" during Nevruz.

DTP Mayor Sentenced for PKK Propaganda

Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others report Metin Tekce, the mayor of the mainly Kurdish southeastern border province of Hakkari, has been sentenced to seven years and one month in prison for "publicly declaring" that the PKK is "not a terrorist organization." Tekce, from Turkey's main Kurdish party DTP, had made the statement to a parliamentary commission which was set up to investigate the "Semdinli bombing" in the same province in November 2005. Tekce, reportedly currently visiting France, will appeal the decision.

Troop Movement at the Iraqi Border

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Vatan, Posta and others report on the tightened security at the Iraqi border by the military to prevent infiltration of terrorists before Nevruz celebrations. Sabah reports that additional troops have been deployed at Sirnak's Uludere, Senoba, Balveren and Andac regions as well as Hakkari's Semdinli and Yuksekova regions. Five thousand troops from the Bolu commando battalion are deployed at the region, as well.

Editorial Commentary on Iraq War Anniversary

Fikret Ertan writes in the intellectual Islamist-oriented daily

Zaman: "As the war enters its fifth year, the pain and agony of the Iraqi people continues to be a fact just like it was in 2003. It is not easy to make an optimistic assessment regarding the future prospects of Iraq. The Saddam regime is gone but the people of Iraq continue to suffer. Along with the Shiite-Sunni conflict, the country is moving toward a sectarian-based separation. Many Iraqis prefer to leave their country. Those who cannot afford to leave are trying to cope with circumstances worse than they were before the war. Both the US and Iraqi administrations are stumbling and seem to be in despair over finding a way to solve the problems."

Okay Gonensin comments in the mainstream daily Vatan: "All wars are dirty and all aggressors are guilty. Nevertheless the latest one, the Iraq War, will be the dirtiest war of all in the history of humanity. After four years of war, the death toll is 1 million people. Given that the population of Iraq is 25 million, the death toll clearly indicates that every household lost at least one family member during the last four years. It is unrealistic to expect a country called Iraq to exist after such a colossal loss of life. Trying to unite Shiites and Sunnis, at this stage, is nothing but a naive act. And Kurds stand by Americans who killed both Sunnis and Shiites. When the US started the war we were given two main reasons. One was the weapons of mass destruction which proved to be a lie. And the second was the threat posed by Saddam Hussein to his country as well as to the world. It is not possible at this point to determine the magnitude of Saddam's potential damage. However, that he would cause the loss of one million lives is quite unlikely."

Survey: More Kurds in Istanbul than Diyarbakir
Mainstream Milliyet carries a public opinion survey, conducted by Konda polling company on interviews with 48,000 Turks in 79 provinces, indicating education and income levels in eastern Turkey

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are lower compared to the western provinces. The survey revealed that Istanbul is the city with the highest Kurdish population in Turkey, with 1.57 million Kurds in the country's largest city of 11.6 million, almost double the number of Kurds living in Diyarbakir (618,000). Milliyet believes the result indicates a high level of integration of Turks and Kurds in Turkey.

Turkish Commander, Turkish Cypriot 'PM' Clash
Sabah, Cumhuriyet, Aksam and Zaman report the commander of Turkish troops in northern Cyprus, General Hayri Kivrikoglu, declined to shake hands with the major coalition party CTP leader and "prime minister" Ferdi Sabit Soyer at a dinner in Lefkosa, "chilling" other invitees. Kivrikoglu said the Turkish national anthem was not played at CTP's party congress, and accused Soyer of holding the congress "on the day of martyrs." An astonished Soyer asked whether Kivrikoglu "doubted Turkish Cypriots' Turkishness," to which the general responded, "You should prove it." A CTP spokesman later told the press playing the national anthem during party congresses was "not stipulated by regulations."

OECD Report on Money Laundering in Turkey
Hurriyet reports that a report by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Financial Action Task Force (FATF) claimed that despite its noteworthy efforts in developing legislation against money laundering, Turkey still has several deficiencies in the field of prevention of money laundering. The report says that in Turkey, the legal mechanism for prevention of money laundering crimes does not work well. Many cases are referred to courts regarding money laundering crimes but no case ends in conviction. The implementation aspect is very weak.

TV Highlights
NTV, 7.00 A.M.

Domestic News

- The AKP administration continues a series of surveys on the preferences of provincial party officials in the presidential elections.
- Prime Minister Erdogan is to file a lawsuit against opposition CHP

leader Baykal who has accused the PM of irregularities in spending for funds.

- A delegation of Turkey's influential businessmen's group TUSIAD will meet in the US with Congressman Robert Wexler in an effort to counter the Armenian genocide resolution. The delegation will also meet IMF officials during their stay in the US.

- The Turkish Energy Minister Hilmi Guler will join the 5th World Water Forum in Istanbul on Tuesday during which Turkey will take over the three-year presidency of the Forum from Mexico.

International News

- The US has granted Iranian President Ahmadinejad a visa, allowing him to address the UN Security Council with regard to his country's economic program. State Spokesman Sean McCormack said the Iranian president should make good use of his visit to UN.

- The wife of Ali Reza Asghari, former Iranian deputy defense minister who went missing in Istanbul, has accused Turkey of handing her husband over to Israel.

- Norwegian deputy foreign minister Raymond Johansen met with Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh in Gaza, easing a one-year-old diplomatic boycott of the Palestinian government.

- A poll in The Financial Times says almost half of the European

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populace complained about the worsening living conditions since their countries joined the EU.

<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON